

United States Senate

June 5, 2015

Secretary Deborah L. James
Secretary of the Air Force
1670 Air Force Pentagon
Washington, DC 20330

Dear Secretary James:

I am writing to thank you for a good, productive conversation this week about the KC-46 basing plan and other Air Force priorities for the coming year. In follow up to our conversation, I would like to invite you to visit Grissom Air Reserve Base prior to making a final decision on the preferred alternative site for third KC-46A Main Operating Base (MOB 3).

I appreciate the challenges facing the Air Force as we face an increasingly complex global security environment with limited resources, and I commend you and General Welsh for your leadership in navigating these difficult times. The KC-46 basing plan, with its emphasis on taking full advantage of the talent, commitment and cost-savings found in the Reserve Component, sends a strong message to the nation that the Air Force is taking these challenges seriously and building on the recommendations of the National Commission on the Structure of the Air Force. In particular, the Commission recommended expanding the number of associate units overall, and the MOB 3 decision is an opportunity to do just that. I hope you will agree with me that the Air Force's next Active Association should be at Grissom.

As we discussed, Grissom meets and exceeds key criteria for hosting the KC-46A mission. The 434th Air Refueling Wing has a superior performance record on the KC-135, with one of the highest mission completion rates in the country and a sterling inspection record. The base is already supporting aerial refueling operations and strategically located in proximity to refueling tracks. As a former Active Duty installation, Grissom's airspace, ramp, runway, supply and operations space, and communications and information technology infrastructure all exceed Air Force requirements. For any modifications required, the base is situated in an area with low construction costs and supportive local leaders. The wing and the surrounding communities are ready to receive, support and sustain Active Duty Airmen with a low cost of living in a variety of environments within driving distance – from cities and small towns to wide open rural areas. Local schools are highly rated and the two major provider networks in the area work with TRICARE.

The most important factor at Grissom is the quality of its Airmen and the unparalleled community support, both in the area and throughout Indiana. The men and women of the 434th know their mission well and execute it with pride, and the Wing leadership team has significant experience with exactly the type of Reserve-Active partnerships the Air Force is looking for in the next KC-46A base. Indiana has already become a location for cutting edge, urgent operation

needs research and development projects at Naval Surface Warfare Crane, and nearby Camp Atterbury and Muscatatuck Urban Training Center host multi- mission, multi-platform training.

I would be honored to host you at Grissom in the coming weeks, so you can see all this, and more, firsthand. Thank you for your service to our nation. I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Joe Donnelly". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Joe" and last name "Donnelly" clearly legible.

Joe Donnelly
United States Senator

Cc: Lt Gen James Jackson
Maj Gen Maryann Miller